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**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PANEL
REVIEWING MILITARY FLYING ACTIVITIES
IN LABRADOR AND QUEBEC**

**REPLY FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE
TO INTERIM RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL**

OTTAWA, May 29, 1987 -- The Panel made public today the reply of the Minister of National Defence, the Honourable Perrin Beatty, to its interim recommendations of January 22, 1987. These recommendations concerned the number of annual low-level sorties, seasonal and altitude restrictions and improvements in communications.

The Panel is currently discussing the reply.

For further information, please write or call collect:

Mr. Carol Martin
Executive Secretary
Environmental Assessment Panel
Reviewing Military flying
Activities in Labrador
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April 15, 1987

Dr. David H. Barnes

Chairman

Environmental Assessment Panel Reviewing

Military Flying Activities in Labrador and Quebec

Federal Environment Assessment Review Office

13th Floor

Fontaine Building

Hull, Quebec

K1A 0H3

Dear Dr. Barnes:

Thank you for your letter of January 22, 1987 in which you have suggested some interim restrictions to the military flying activities in Labrador and Quebec. I am advised by Departmental authorities that current restrictions as defined in the Goose Bay Station Flying Orders not only already cover a number of your suggestions but in fact are more stringent.

The former Associate Minister of National Defence requested an environmental review of military flying activities conducted out of Goose Bay primarily to evaluate the likely effects, if any, of establishing the NATO Tactical Fighter Weapons Training Centre and developing tactical ranges at Goose Bay, and to identify ways to reduce any potential adverse impact. Although current flying activity was also mentioned in his letter, which I enclose for your perusal, you will note that the focus was to be on the aforementioned two proposed activities. I am satisfied that the current military training activities are conducted in a responsible manner and until such time as the evaluation is completed, I am not prepared to initiate drastic new and additional restrictions in the absence of substantiated scientific data. The Department of National Defence (DND) has been conducting more intensive levels of training in a much smaller range area in Cold Lake, Alberta, for over 30 years, including low flying, supersonic flight and weapons delivery. There is no evidence of the type of negative impact on the environment as suggested by participants in the public

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hearings conducted by your panel last October and November. Nonetheless their basic concerns will be addressed in the Environmental Impact Statement being prepared by my Department over the next two years. I feel your suggestion that further restrictions be imposed on the current operations without substantive evidence for such action would be premature.

Furthermore, the Multinational Memorandum of Understanding (MMOU) signed in February 1986, was negotiated on behalf of Canada by DND under long-standing agreements with the allied nations of the United States, the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany. The MMOU details the scope of allied military flying training and defines the dimensions and areas in which tactical flying training may be conducted down to 100 feet above all obstacles within 200 feet of track. Although there was and is no implied or stated limitation indicated in the agreements to the number of sorties per day permitted each military user, the MMOU does limit the number of combat aircraft each nation is permitted to have at Goose Bay to 25 at any one time. Furthermore, all the agreements, including the recently concluded accord with the Government of The Netherlands, stipulate that the Allies are to abide by all Canadian environmental laws and flying regulations. In light of these considerations, to require that the number of low-level sorties flown out of Goose Bay over the next few years not exceed the 1986 total would be unrealistic. To do so would interfere with the current users' training programs, and would totally preclude the Royal Netherlands Air Force personnel commencing any training operations this summer. Moreover, it would prejudice the results of the assessment, and would serve only to diminish the chances of the future economic well-being of the region, perhaps needlessly.

With respect to your reference to the Aeronautical Regulations, I would point out that paragraph 102(2) of this document states that the Regulations do not apply to Canadian or foreign military aircraft which are flying under my authority as Minister of National Defence. However, in an effort to minimize impacts on the population and environment, local flying orders are established which provide a variety of restrictions to military flights. The Station Flying Orders for Goose Bay state that military

aircraft operating out of Goose Bay are subject to certain restrictions, as follows:

- a. Towns/Settlements - not below 2,000 feet Above Ground Level (AGL) within 2.5 nautical miles (nm);
- b. Fishing/Hunting Camps - (as identified by the Military Co-ordination Centre) not below 2,000 feet AGL within 2.5 nm;
- c. Coastal Areas - not below 2,000 feet AGL in all coastal areas (east of the red line depicted on the enclosed map) unless at least 5 nm out to sea; and
- d. Wildlife - flight below 2,000 feet AGL over wildlife concentrations is to be avoided wherever possible.

These restrictions exceed those which you have proposed.

I cannot agree with your interpretation of Section 534 of the Aeronautical Regulations whereby you suggest that "the large number of movements of persons on the land are equivalent to the open air assemblies" cited in the above Regulation. The same Regulation permits aircraft over non-populous areas or open water to fly at less than 500 feet above all obstacles within 500 feet of the aircraft. Both designated Low Level Training Areas in fact lie in the Sparsely Populated Area as designated by the Department of Transport. The people who travel into these areas do so in very small groups and remain for short periods of time. They are encouraged to contact the Military Co-ordination Centre to advise the location of these camps, and we are thereby able to have the local flying restrictions applied to their camps for the duration of their stay. In many cases this contact has been very positive and has resulted in complete avoidance of the affected camps. However, in other cases, community leaders have refused to communicate their intentions which has resulted in occasional over-flights until these camps are noticed and their location subsequently passed to the Military Co-ordination Centre. Your suggestion that a toll-free telephone line be installed has been mentioned previously and appears to be a sound recommendation. Accordingly, we have taken steps to have a useful and hopefully abuse-free system installed. The

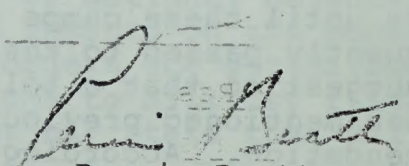
service will be publicized appropriately so that all who travel to the interior will be aware of the number and its purpose.

The Department of National Defence has had many meetings with leaders of Innu and Inuit communities to discuss military flying activities. These meetings have been very beneficial and have resulted in adjustments to the flying operations in order to reduce disturbances to communities and camps. The Commanding Officer and Operations staff of Canadian Forces Station Goose Bay are currently amending the Station Flying Orders to reflect, among other things, suggestions put forth by community leaders to change some of the flying operations procedures and training areas.

You have suggested that temporarily limiting low-level flights in some areas would permit certain components of the ecosystem to recover from any possible impacts of low-level flying, yet you have also stated that you do not wish to prejudge the conclusions of the studies being conducted by this Department. I am concerned that a prejudgement is being made here, based on unsubstantiated evidence provided by individuals whose goal is clearly to oppose military flying training in Labrador and Quebec. I am satisfied that the measures currently in place adequately minimize the exposure of people and concentrations of wildlife to noise.

I hope you will agree that, after reviewing the existing flying restrictions that are imposed by the Military Co-ordination Centre on current operations, the suggestions you have made with respect to altitude restrictions are more than adequately met. I look forward to the outcome of the environmental study about to commence, as I believe it will produce much useful data which will assist this Department in continuing to provide a safe, well co-ordinated flying training program in Goose Bay.

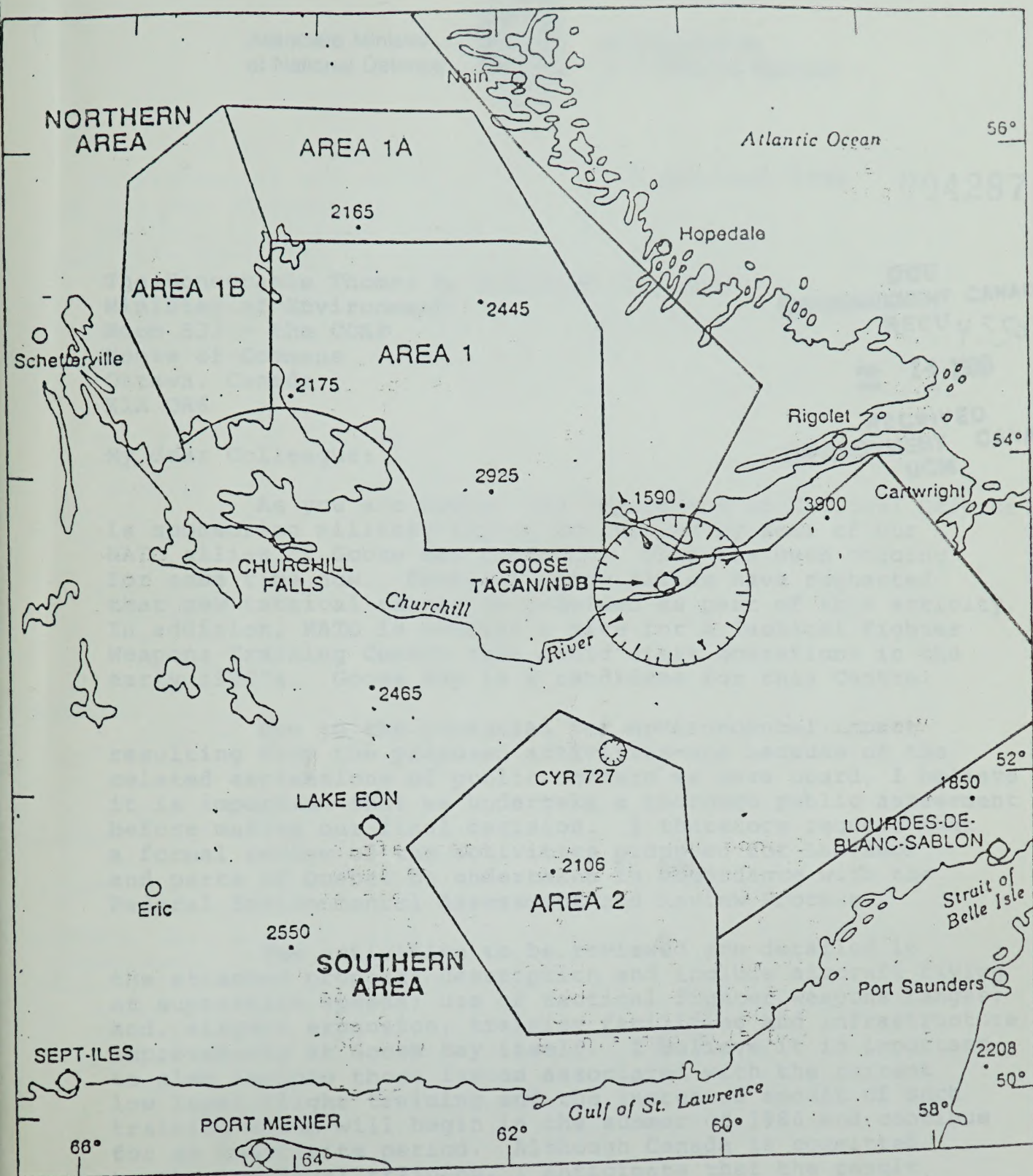
Sincerely,



Perrin Beatty

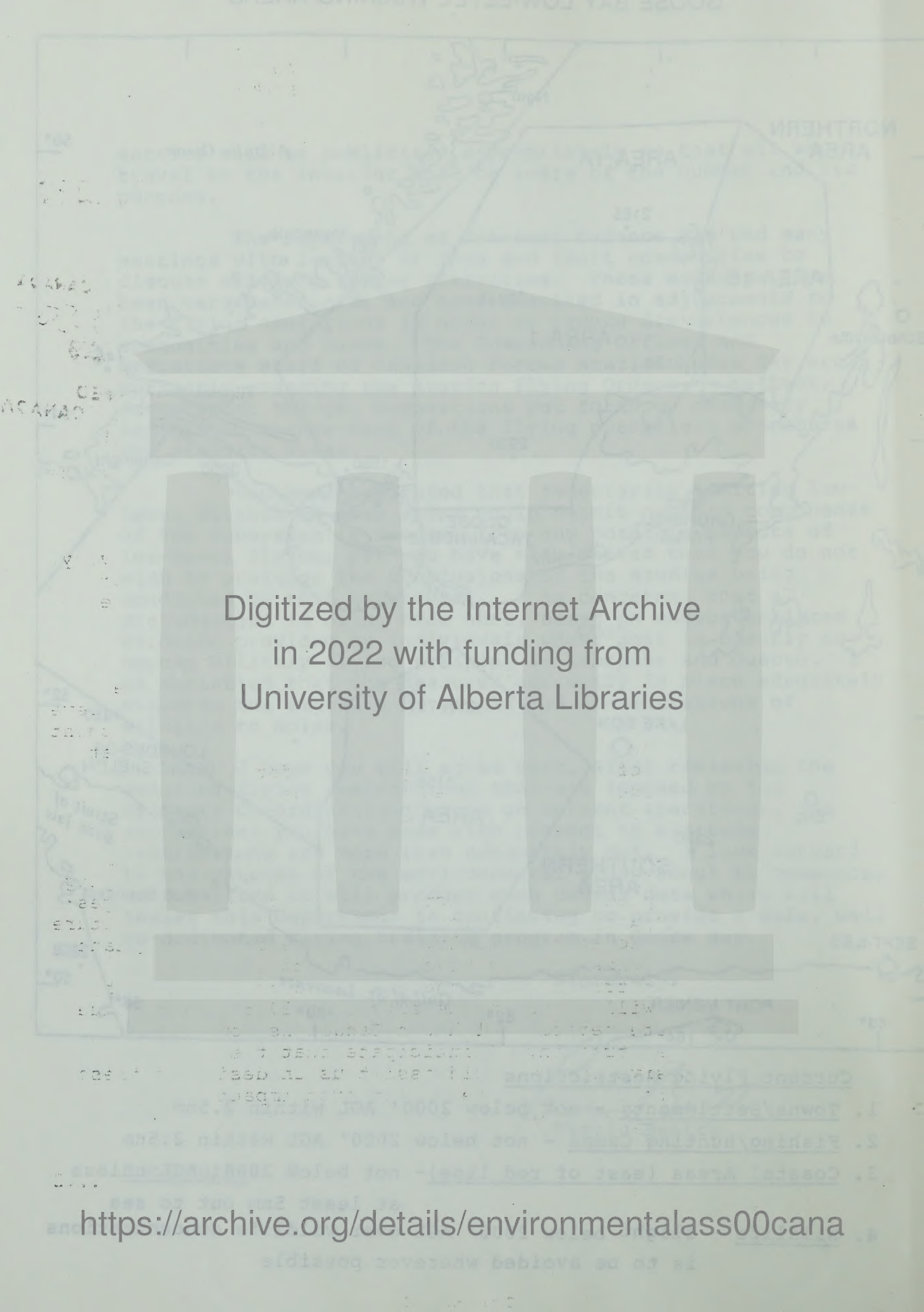
Enclosures: 2

GOOSE BAY LOW-LEVEL TRAINING AREAS



Current Flying Restrictions

1. Towns/Settlements - not below 2000' AGL within 2.5nm
2. Fishing/Hunting Camps - not below 2000' AGL within 2.5nm
3. Coastal Areas (east of red line) - not below 2000' AGL unless at least 5nm out to sea
4. Wildlife - flight below 2000' AGL over wildlife concentrations is to be avoided wherever possible



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Associate Minister
of National Defence



Ministre associé
de la Défense nationale

13 February 1986

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The Honourable Thomas M. McMillan P.C. M.P.
Minister of Environment
Room 533 - the CONF
House of Commons
Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0A6

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My dear Colleague:

As you are aware, the Department of National Defence is sponsoring military flying activities by some of our NATO allies in Goose Bay Labrador. This has been ongoing for some time now. Recently these allies have requested that new tactical ranges be provided as part of this activity. In addition, NATO is seeking a site for a Tactical Fighter Weapons Training Centre that could start operations in the early 1990's. Goose Bay is a candidate for this Centre.

Due to the potential for environmental impact resulting from the proposed activities—and because of the related expressions of public concern we have heard, I believe it is important that we undertake a thorough public assessment before making our final decision. I therefore request that a formal review of the activities proposed for Labrador and parts of Quebec be undertaken in accordance with the Federal Environmental Assessment and Review Process.

The activities to be reviewed are detailed in the attached proposal description and include aircraft flying at supersonic speeds; use of tactical fighter weapons ranges; and, airport expansion, training facilities and infrastructure improvements at Goose Bay itself. I believe it is important to also include those issues associated with the current low level flight training and the increased amount of such training which will begin in the summer of 1986 and continue for an indefinite period. Although Canada is committed to the low level training, I anticipate that the result of a comprehensive review would assist us in designing these activities further to minimize any adverse impact.

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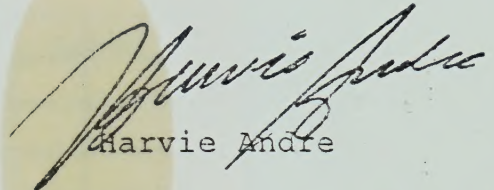
I expect the review to be comprehensive in respect of the environmental and social issues associated with the proposal, but broad policy issues such as native land claims and Canada's defence policy would not properly be within the scope of an environmental assessment. I also consider that the separate DND initiative in Labrador, the new North Warning radar system, should not be included. This project is being considered independently.

I recognize that there are several jurisdictions involved, namely the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Province of Quebec, the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement and the Federal Environmental Assessment and Review Process. I would particularly request that efforts be made to co-ordinate the requirements of all parties to avoid duplication of effort and to ensure that all jurisdictions have the opportunity to participate fully. I understand that the environmental review will provide opportunities for all potentially affected persons and communities to identify the issues of concern to them, to contribute to the preparation of guidelines for environmental impact studies, to comment on the results of these studies, and to make representations in public meetings held for the purpose.

National Defence is the initiating Department for the review and will also act as proponent for the proposals to be reviewed. The point of contact in National Defence for the process is the Director, Conservation and Environment, Mr. A.T. Downs. The point of contact for the detail of the proposals is the Director, Air Plans, Colonel G.E. McArthur. In accordance with the terms of the Environmental Assessment Review Process Guidelines Order, I understand you will consult with me in developing the Terms of Reference for the Panel. Might I suggest that our colleague, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, also be consulted because of his significant interest in the matter. I will send him a copy of this letter to advise him that I have asked you to undertake this review.

It is important that we understand the potential environmental and social consequences of these activities that the review will bring to light to aid us in our decision making. It is also important that our decisions be timely. We are committed to increased flying next year and NATO will expect us to be prepared to respond promptly to any invitation to host a Tactical Fighter Weapons Training Centre. To this end, I trust the review process can be completed expeditiously.

Yours sincerely,



Harvie Andre

Enclosure: 1

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